

Dead Wood Brings New Life

Hard to believe, but trees can actually provide more habitats for wildlife dead than when they are alive. Standing dead and dying trees, called “snags” or “wildlife trees,” are important for wildlife in both natural and landscaped settings, occurring as a result of disease, lightning, fire, animal damage, too much shade, drought, root competition, as well as old age.



Wood duck ducklings plunging from their nest cavity in a tree.

Photo credit: Mike Lentz Images

Birds, small mammals, and other wildlife use snags for nests, nurseries, storage areas, foraging, roosting, and perching. Live trees with snag-like features, such as hollow trunks, excavated cavities, and dead branches can provide similar wildlife value.

Snags occurring along streams and shorelines eventually may fall into the

water, adding important woody debris to aquatic habitat.

Dead branches are often used as perches; snags that lack limbs are often more decayed and, may have more and larger cavities for shelter and nesting. Snags enhance local natural areas by attracting wildlife species that may not otherwise be found there.

All trees of all sizes are potential snags. Unfortunately, many wildlife trees are cut down without much thought to their wildlife value or of the potential management options that can safely prolong the existence of the tree. Wildlife trees offer a one-stop, natural habitat feature. In short, snags “live on” as excellent wildlife trees for all to enjoy!

Article credit: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/living/snags/>



Raccoon family in a tree den.

Photo credit:

<http://wdfw.wa.gov/living/snags/>



Red squirrel poking out of a den tree savoring a nut dropped by a passerby.

Photo Credit: [Bruce Yolton](#)

Requesting to Remove Trees:

All trees within 100’ of a wetland or 200’ of a River/perennial stream require permission from the North Andover Conservation Commission to be removed under the MA Wetlands Protection Act and the Town of North Andover Wetlands Protection Bylaw. Healthy trees require the submittal of a formal filing as either a “Request for Determination of Applicability (RDA)” or a “Notice of Intent (NOI)” depending on the scope of the proposed work. For unhealthy trees that may pose a safety hazard please read below:

The Conservation Commission recognizes the potential hazards that dead, dying and compromised trees can pose to safety and property. As such, the Commission

has established the following protocol to address instances where a single tree, or perhaps a small number of trees, may pose a hazard to safety and property.

Tree Removal Request Protocol:

Any person seeking permission to remove or cut a potentially hazardous tree (or trees) within 100' of a wetland or 200' of a river/perennial stream shall:

1. Send a letter to the North Andover Conservation Commission, which shall clearly indicate the number of trees, the location, the proximity to structure(s) and driveway(s) and the reason why they are seeking permission for their removal or cutting.
2. Include with the letter, photographs clearly showing the tree they are seeking to have removed (if necessary, mark the tree with a brightly colored ribbon prior to taking photographs – please do not use spray paint).
3. Indicate (if known) who will be doing the work and how (i.e. using a crane, etc.), and if any other vegetation needs to be disturbed to access the tree. (Trees removed shall be flush cut, with the stump remaining in place.)

The Conservation Commission only grants permission for tree removal; the Commission does not perform the work or order any other agency to perform the work. Any approval granted through the Conservation Commission does not grant property rights or any exclusive privileges; it does not authorize any injury to private property or invasion of private rights. The applicant, if not the owner of the property on which the tree is located, shall provide the Commission with a written authorization from the owner, indicating their approval for the request.

Any approval granted by the Conservation Commission does not relieve the applicant from the necessity of complying with all other applicable federal, state, or local statutes, ordinances, or regulations.

If the tree is a public shade tree the Department of Public Works should also be contacted. If the property is in watershed or located within a Planned Residential Development (PRD), the Planning Board should also be consulted.

Procedure adopted by the North Andover Conservation Commission August 27, 2014.

Requests can be submitted via e-mail to hgaffney@townofnorthandover.com, or dropped off/mailed to:

North Andover Conservation Department
1600 Osgood Street, Suite 2035
North Andover, MA 01845